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The Assist

Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum

December 2003

Volume 3, No. 2

Conferences Are a Success!

Dear Readers,

Thank you to those who participated in the Annual District and School MI-Access Coordinator Conferences this fall. We had excellent attendance across the state, particularly in Marquette where we enjoyed a large turnout as well as unseasonably warm and sunny weather. If you were unable to attend the fall conferences, the PowerPoint presentations for each session are posted at www.mi.gov/mi-access.

We continue to be amazed and impressed by how our conversations with you grow richer each year as we learn more about MI-Access and assessing students with special needs on a statewide basis. We hope you will continue to share your thoughts, ideas, and concerns with us through our annual teleconference, our online surveys, and the other feedback mechanisms we have developed.

Thanks also for your recent input on the *Proposed Phase 2.1 MI-Access Assessment Plan*. We are reviewing the feedback from the online survey, incorporating it where appropriate, and will take the plan to the State Board of Education this winter. Tryouts for the proposed assessment will begin in spring, shortly after the MI-Access assessment window. (For more information, see "Phase 2.1 MI-Access Barrels Forward" on page 6.)

By now, all District MI-Access Coordinators should have received training materials, which were shipped in October. If not, please call the Toll-free MI-Access Hotline (1-888-382-4246) or send an e-mail message to mi-access@tasa.com. Next up for shipment are the Winter 2004 assessment materials (Participation, Supported Independence, and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE), which should arrive in your district in early-to-mid-January. (For more information, see "Notes from the Contractor to MI-Access Coordinators" on page 2.)

We know this is a busy time of year for all of you. We thank you for your continued involvement with MI-Access and for sticking with us as we roll out the new Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments. If you have any questions, be sure to use the Toll-free MI-Access Hotline and e-mail address. Also remember you can share questions with us at our upcoming Winter 2004 Live MI-Access Teleconference. (For more information, see "Third Annual Live MI-Access Teleconference Scheduled" on page 4.)

Happy holidays!

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If you have ideas, suggestions, or
tips you would like to see included in
The Assist, send them to
mi-access@tasa.com.

NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR TO MI-ACCESS COORDINATORS

Thanks to District MI-Access Coordinators and our MI-Access Online System, BETA/TASA was able to collect projected student and teacher counts for Winter 2004 assessment materials in a timely manner. These numbers are critical because they determine how many assessment materials are printed and shipped.

Shipment of Winter 2004 Assessment Materials

The assessment materials ordered in October will be shipped from BETA/TASA during the first week in January, which should give District MI-Access Coordinators ample time to review their shipment and distribute materials to individual schools in the district.

- District MI-Access Coordinators will receive assessment materials for both Phase 1 MI-Access (Participation and Supported Independence) and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE in the same shipment. Please note that after assessment administration, the Phase 1 MI-Access materials and the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE materials must be kept separate. To help with that task, BETA/TASA will provide two separate teacher return envelopes with different color labels. Instructions for using the two envelopes are included in the *Winter 2004 Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*. (Hard copies of the manual will be included in the shipment of assessment materials. Electronic copies also may be downloaded from **www.mi.gov/mi-access**.)
- In addition to information on Phase 1 MI-Access assessments, this year's manual (Winter 2004) includes an entire section on how to use and complete all the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessment materials. Please refer to it before, during, and after assessment administration.
- Each shipment of assessment materials will include a *District Coordinator Sample Packet*, containing a sample of every sheet, document, and envelope that schools will be using. Therefore, if a School MI-Access Coordinator calls with

questions, district coordinators can refer to the appropriate document and provide clarification or obtain answers.

Additional Assessment Materials

If you, as a District MI-Access Coordinator, find that your counts have changed or that you did not receive sufficient materials, there are two options for obtaining additional materials. First, you may submit requests through the MI-Access Online System, which now has a feature entitled "Winter 2004 MI-Access Additional Materials Request Form." Click on that icon, enter the requested information, and submit your request as directed. Second, requests may be faxed to BETA/TASA using the *Winter 2004 MI-Access Additional Materials Request Form* found at the back of the *Winter 2004 Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*. Requests should be submitted as soon as possible in order to fill them before the assessment window begins on February 16, 2004. (Additional materials may be ordered during the assessment window if new students enroll in the district; however, all requests must be made prior to the close of the assessment window on March 31, 2004.)

Updating MI-Access Coordinator Information

Please remember to update your district coordinator information through the MI-Access Online System. BETA/TASA needs current names and accurate street addresses to deliver assessment materials and results quickly and to the correct recipients. It especially needs e-mail addresses, so BETA/TASA and the MI-Access staff can pass along news and other communications in a timely fashion. (Corresponding by e-mail has proven to be the most efficient way to communicate with District MI-Access Coordinators.) If you need BETA/TASA to resend your district's link and password for the MI-Access Online System, call the Toll-free MI-Access Hotline at 1-888-382-4246 or send an e-mail message to **mi-access@tasa.com**.

The BRIGANCE®: Look for These Assessment Materials

As reported in the last issue of *The Assist* (August 2003, Volume 3), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has purchased the BRIGANCE to use for its interim Phase 2 assessments. That means that all students in grades 4, 7, 8, and 11, whose Individualized Education Programs (IEP) indicate that they are eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access (in English language arts and/or mathematics), MUST be administered the BRIGANCE during the MI-Access assessment window (February 16 through March 31).

Training sessions on the *BRIGANCE Inventories* (the *Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills—Revised* and the *Inventory of Essential Skills*) were offered at each of the four Annual District and School MI-Access Coordinator Conferences this fall. The sessions also included detailed information on how the administration of the BRIGANCE has been customized for Michigan. (Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE training is also available online at www.mi.gov/mi-access.)

When Winter 2004 assessment materials arrive in districts in January, they will include the following customized BRIGANCE materials:

- assessment booklets,
- student answer documents,
- answer keys,
- teacher identification sheets, and
- teacher return envelopes.

These are all the materials you will need to administer the assessments. (The *BRIGANCE Inventories* are NOT necessary for assessment administration.)

Assessment Booklets

If you have administered the BRIGANCE before, Michigan's customized assessment booklets will look familiar: Each administrator page will appear

directly opposite the corresponding student page. The administrator pages will include a list of materials needed, directions for administering the assessment questions, and, in some cases, lists of words or questions the assessment administrator may need to read to or follow along with the student. The student pages will include only the assessment question(s). The MDE has purposely kept its booklet design as close to the BRIGANCE design as possible for ease of administration.

The booklets will be organized by grade (4, 7, 8, or 11) and content area (English language arts or mathematics). One English language arts and/or one mathematics booklet will be provided for each student eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access and for each teacher administering the assessment.

Braille and Enlarged Print Assessment Booklets

The Michigan School for the Blind (MSB) has agreed to help MI-Access produce and disseminate Braille and enlarged print versions of the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessment booklets. More details on ordering these booklets will be provided through the District MI-Access Coordinator Listserv and from the MSB.

Student Answer Documents

District MI-Access Coordinators will receive one student answer document for each of its eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access students. The answer documents will be organized by grade (4, 7, 8, or 11) and will include English language arts (ELA) and mathematics for grades 4 and 11, just ELA for grade 7, and just mathematics for grade 8. (The grade 4 and 11 answer documents were designed to include both content areas to eliminate the need to match two different answer documents to one specific student.) The scan documents

must be filled in by the assessment administrator according to the directions in the *Winter 2004 Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*.

Answer Key Booklets

The *BRIGANCE Inventories* typically include an answer key in the lower left-hand corner of the administrator page. Since assessment administrators in Michigan may be administering some assessment questions in a group setting (meaning students will have the whole assessment booklet in hand at their own tables or desks), and because the student pages in the assessment booklets cannot be removed, Michigan's customized assessment booklets will not include answer keys. Instead, separate Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE answer keys are being incorporated into a booklet for assessment administrators to use during and/or after administration.

Teacher Scan Sheets and Envelopes

For the Winter 2002 and 2003 administration of MI-Access, teachers returned all of their assessment scan sheets (*Student Observation Sheets*, *Teacher Identification Sheets*, and *Students Eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access Scan Forms*) in one envelope. This year, BETA/TASA, the MI-Access operational contractor, is asking that all Phase 1 MI-Access (Participation and Supported Independence) scan forms be returned in one teacher return envelope and all Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE scan forms be returned in another. This will help speed up the scoring process and ensure that the correct teachers receive the correct results. The proper way to return materials is explained in detail in the *Winter 2004 Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*. (Hard copies of the manual will be shipped with assessment materials in January. Electronic copies also may be

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Third Annual Live MI-Access Teleconference Scheduled

For the past two years, the MI-Access staff has held a live teleconference in January—the month immediately preceding the beginning of the MI-Access assessment window. The goal of the teleconference is to help District MI-Access Coordinators review

- the assessment materials they received,
- how to distribute them, and
- how to return them for scanning and scoring.

The teleconference also provides an opportunity for coordinators to discuss their questions and concerns with Peggy Dutcher, Coordinator, State Assessment for Students with Disabilities.

Following last year's teleconference, the MI-Access staff conducted an

online survey to determine whether the teleconference was a useful communication tool. The response was a resounding yes. Most coordinators appreciated the review of their responsibilities before, during, and after MI-Access administration, particularly because the materials and processes evolve from year to year. They also enjoyed having instant feedback on questions asked of Ms. Dutcher.

Data from BETA/TASA—the company that scans and scores MI-Access assessment materials—provides additional support for the teleconference review. In Winter 2003, it found that 21.3 percent of the 540 districts participating in MI-Access had important assessment materials missing from their return shipments. Of that amount, 16.9 percent were missing all-important district, school, and/or teacher identification sheets, and 23.5

percent were missing critical data on the sheets returned.

Regardless of the specific error, returning materials improperly delays the return of results and, more importantly, undermines the accuracy of assessment data. Therefore, if the teleconference can help reduce even a few errors, the MDE has determined it is worth hosting.

This year, the Winter 2004 Live MI-Access Teleconference will take place on January 21, 2004, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. The coordinates and the teleconference agenda will be posted at **www.mi.gov/mi-access**, so look for updates there. If you have any technical questions prior to the teleconference, please call Ed Cheeney, Cheeney Media Concepts², at 517-337-2622.

The BRIGANCE®: Look for These Assessment Materials

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downloaded from **www.mi.gov/mi-access**.)

Numbers of Materials

In October, District MI-Access Coordinators were asked to use the MI-Access Online System to submit estimates of the number of teachers and students who would be participating in the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments. Those numbers will be used to determine how many BRIGANCE assessment materials are shipped to each district. If it is determined later that additional materials are needed,

District MI-Access Coordinators may contact the MI-Access contractor by fax or through the MI-Access Online System. (See "Notes from the Contractor to MI-Access Coordinators" on page 2 for more detailed information on ordering additional materials.) ONLY District MI-Access Coordinators can make the request; therefore, please work through your contact at the district level. (For information on District and School MI-Access Coordinators, consult the "MI-Access Coordinator List" on the Web at **www.mi.gov/mi-access**.)

Professional Development Opportunity

If you were unable to participate in the BRIGANCE training sessions at the Annual District and School MI-Access Coordinator Conferences this fall, and/or were unable to participate in training at the district or school level, you should review the BRIGANCE online training program at **www.mi.gov/mi-access**. It walks through the many ways in which the *BRIGANCE Inventories* have been adapted for use in Michigan.

Districts Receive Students Eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access Results and Important NCLB Information

Last year, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) provided MI-Access a challenge with getting results for students eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access back to districts before the end of the school year. After all the MI-Access assessment materials were returned to BETA/TASA for scoring, it was determined that not only did schools and districts have to report how many students participated in the state assessment system, they also had to report whether or not the students were proficient on the English language arts (ELA) and/or mathematics assessments they took.

This was a fairly easy task for students participating in statewide standardized Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and Phase 1 MI-Access assessments, but not so easy for others. For instance, students eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access participated in a wide array of assessments—from locally-developed and off-the-shelf commercial assessments to progress toward annual IEP goals and objectives.

To determine whether these students were proficient, the MDE convened a group of education experts to develop "proficiency" criteria for every assessment used. Then, it had to disseminate the criteria to districts and schools, which in turn, had to determine student proficiency and submit their determinations to BETA/TASA through an online data collection system. BETA/TASA processed that information and, in October 2003, returned results to Michigan districts.

The results included district and school summary and/or listing reports showing (1) how many stu-

dents eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access participated in alternate assessment, (2) how many students were proficient on the ELA and mathematics assessments they took, and (3) how many students were not proficient. The results were accompanied by the *Winter 2003 Interpretation Guide: Students Eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access Results and Using MI-Access Results in Verifying NCLB Calculations*, which illustrated and described the reports in detail.

The guide also included important information related to Phase 1 MI-Access. While results for the Participation and Supported Independence assessments were returned to districts last June, the MDE still had the task of determining which of the Performance Expectations (PEs) in Phase 1 MI-Access corresponded with the NCLB content areas (ELA and mathematics). Furthermore, because the NCLB data had to be reported by grade and Phase 1 MI-Access assessments were administered by age, the MDE had to determine which ages corre-

sponded with which NCLB grades. The table below shows what was decided.

Finally, the interpretation guide included a separate worksheet showing districts and schools how to combine Phase 1 MI-Access (Participation and Supported Independence) results with Students Eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access results to verify the number of students participating in alternate assessment for NCLB school and district participation rate calculations. (Please note that the worksheet was intended to help districts and schools verify their calculations; it does NOT need to be submitted to the MDE.) If you are a District MI-Access Coordinator with Phase 2 MI-Access students and you did not receive results and/or the interpretation guide, please call the Toll-free MI-Access Hotline (1-888-382-4246) or send an e-mail message to mi-access@tasa.com. You may review a copy of the interpretation guide online at www.cmc2.tv/miacd/pdf/scoring_guide.pdf.

NCLB and Phase 1 MI-Access Correspondence			
NCLB Grades and Content Areas		Phase 1 MI-Access Ages* and Performance Expectations (PEs)	
		Participation	Supported Independence
Grade 4	ELA	Age 10 PE-1	Age 10 PE-5
Grade 4	Mathematics	Age 10 PE-2	Age 10 PE-7
Grade 7	ELA	Age 13 PE-3	Age 13 PE-1
Grade 8	Mathematics	Age 14 PE-2	Age 14 PE-7
Grade 11	ELA	Age 17 PE-3 and Age 18 PE-4	Age 17 PE-1 and Age 18 PE-5
Grade 11	Mathematics	Age 17 PE-5 and Age 18 PE-2	Age 17 PE-3 and Age 18 PE-7
*Ages as of December 1st in the school year in which the student is assessed.			

Phase 2.1 MI-Access Barrels Forward

This fall was a busy time for Phase 2.1 MI-Access. In October, the MDE conducted an internal review of thousands of potential English language arts and mathematics assessment items. In November, those items were reviewed during a two-day meeting by members of the Phase 2 MI-Access Content Advisory Committees (CAC2s)—one for English language arts and one for mathematics.

Together, the CAC2s are comprised of more than 60 classroom teachers, school psychologists, parents, teacher consultants, and other practitioners familiar with the students taking part in Phase 2.1 MI-Access.

Each committee was charged with reviewing the draft assessment items in their content area and grade levels to make sure they (1) accurately reflected the identified extended grade level content expectations or benchmarks, (2) met the item specifications for conceptual accuracy and completeness, and (3) were grade-appropriate for the Phase 2.1 student population.

A Sensitivity Review Committee (SRC) was also formed and consists of about twelve parents, teachers, administrators, and attorneys. The SRC was charged with reviewing all of the assessment items for bias related to such things as ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, culture, and so forth. Half of the SRC members reviewed the mathematics assessment items with these factors in mind and the other half reviewed items related to English language arts. In addition, the SRC members looked for issues that, because of their sensitive nature, were not appropriate for a statewide assessment.

Once all the items were reviewed by the CAC2s and the SRC, they were revised or dropped as needed. The items that remained are now in the process of being incorporated into multiple Phase 2.1 MI-Access assessment booklets, which will be used during try-outs this spring.

"Trying out" assessment items is a critical step in the assessment development process, particularly for this student population, which represents

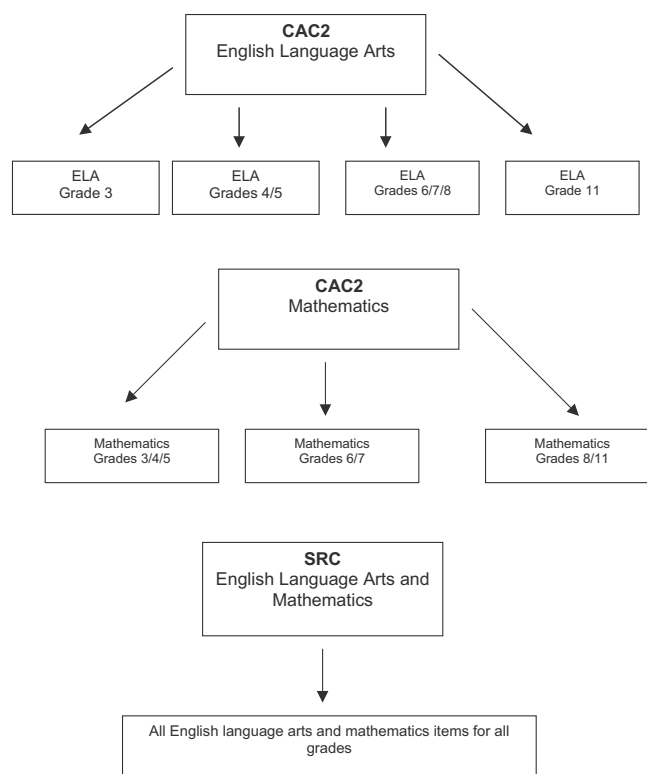
uncharted territory for states. By trying out assessment items, the MDE and the field will have a much better sense of how students respond to them and whether or not they are appropriate for use in a state-level assessment. Once assessment results are available on the items, the CAC2 committees will reconvene to review the data and feedback from districts and make item revisions as needed.

In November, the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) sent a letter to District MI-Access Coordinators regarding participation in the item try-out. The letter asked each district to administer one or both of the Phase 2.1 assessments (ELA and/or mathematics) to their Phase 2 MI-Access students. The Department sincerely appreciates district efforts to help develop the best assessment possible for Phase 2 students.

The chart below illustrates the different review committees and the items they are responsible for reviewing. Also included is a checklist for the assessment development process.

Assessment Development Checklist

- ☐ Develop assessment plan
- ☐ Field review of assessment plan
- ☐ Draft assessment items
- ☐ Committee review of assessment items
- ☐ Item tryouts
- ☐ Committee review of tryout results and feedback
- ☐ Pilot testing of assessment
- ☐ Committee review of pilot results and feedback
- ☐ Statewide implementation of Phase 2.1 MI-Access



What Does One Percent Mean?

Prior to publication of this issue of *The Assist*, there was a great deal of misinformation surrounding the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and what has come to be referred to as "the one percent issue." It is critically important that school and district officials understand that **neither the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) nor NCLB limit the number of special education students participating in alternate assessment** as long as a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team uses the state's guidelines for determining which state assessment its student with disabilities should take.

The one percent issue **only** relates to a proposed NCLB regulation, which as of the end of October, stipulated that only one percent of alternate assessment scores could be used when calculating

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). At the end of October this regulation had not been finalized and, therefore, was still subject to change. The MI-Access staff will keep District MI-Access Coordinators updated on this issue through its Listserv and encourages coordinators to share the information with their colleagues.

In the meantime, please advise IEP Teams to use the state's guidelines when determining which state assessment their students should take (the guidelines can be downloaded from **www.mi.gov/mi-access**). Furthermore, if a team is seriously wavering between its student taking alternate assessment or the MEAP or the MEAP with assessment accommodations, it most likely should recommend the MEAP (with or without assessment accommodations as appropriate).

GLOSSARY



Adequate Yearly Progress

(AYP): AYP is a formula, introduced in No Child Left Behind and approved by the State Board of Education, which is used to identify successful Title 1 schools as well as schools in need of improvement. It is also used in the new state accreditation system, Education YES!, where it will affect the grades given to many schools. A school is in "school improvement status" if it fails to make AYP for two consecutive years.

Students Eligible for Phase 2

MI-Access: A term that refers to students whose IEP Teams have determined it is inappropriate for them to take the MEAP (with or without assessment accommodations), MI-Access Participation, or MI-Access Supported Independence. Since Michigan's Phase 2 MI-Access assessments are not yet developed, students whose IEPs said they should take Phase 2 MI-Access were considered "eligible" for the assessment once it was developed. Starting in 2003/2004, these students must be administered the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments, until the state's own Phase 2 assessments are ready for implementation.

Item: A statement, question, exercise, or task in an assessment for which the test taker is to select or construct a response or perform a task. (*Standards for Educational & Psychological Testing*, 1999.)

Item Pool: The aggregate of items from which a test or test scale's items are selected during test development. (*Standards for Educational & Psychological Testing*, 1999.)



MI-Access Has New Web Address

Tired of having to hunt for MI-Access information on the MDE Web site? Now you can go directly to the MI-Access site at:

www.mi.gov/mi-access

No more clicking on Administrators, then Special Education, then Assessment and Accommodations. You can find MI-Access resources, results, presentations, online surveys, and quick links all in one, easy-to-find place. Bookmark it now!

Accountability Web Site

Do you have questions about assessment and accountability? If so (and who doesn't?), there is a place on the MDE Web site where you can find answers. On the Web, go to **www.mi.gov/mde**, and then click on "School Assessment and Accountability" in the left-hand column. At the site, you will find links to everything from NCLB and Education Yes! to MEAP and MI-Access.



The Assist

Important MI-Access Dates

MI-Access Live Teleconference

January 21, 2004
3:00 to 4:30 p.m.

MI-Access 2004 Assessment Window

February 16 - March 31, 2004

Ship MI-Access Assessment Materials to BETA/TASA

by April 9, 2004



Bookmark these Web sites:

www.mi.gov/mde

www.mi.gov/mi-access

www.meritaward.state.mi.us/mma/meap.htm

This newsletter related to the assessment of students with disabilities is distributed to local and intermediate superintendents, directors of special education, MI-Access Coordinators, MEAP Coordinators, SEAC, Special Education monitors, MDE staff, school principals, Parent Advisory Committees, and institutes of higher education. *The Assist* may also be downloaded from the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services section of the MDE Web site: www.mi.gov/mi-access.

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Parents
School Libraries
Community Organizations

Michigan Department of Education
MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program
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